Religious Education
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Youth
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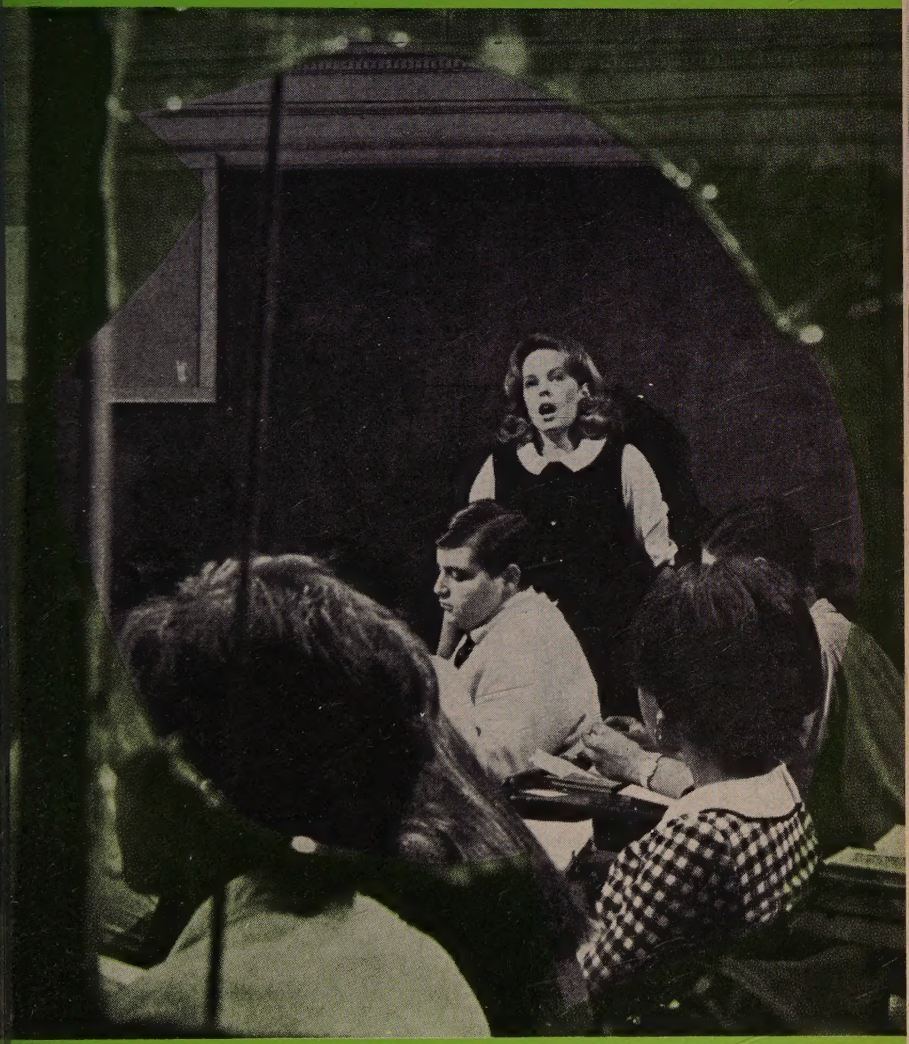

o the Down Staircase"—author interviewed

troit teens discuss—**riots and black power**

Dennis Renault, Open Forum (Ben Roth

Graffito

no winners, only losers

Y HARVEY COX / Enraged by long-standing grievances and the persistent ilure of authorities to act, a surly crowd gathers in the streets. Armed ldiers seek to disperse the clots of people. Someone throws a stone. anicky, the custodians of order nervously finger their weapons. A shot is red. Suddenly a black man clutches his breast and falls to the street dead. he uprising begins.

Watts 1965? Hough 1966? Detroit 1967? No, the above scene took ace in Boston in 1770. The angry crowd was protesting the unwillingness the Crown to allow them to share in determining their own political entity. The gendarmes were British soldiers. The black man was Crispus ttucks.

Violence has "worked" in American history. Every fourth grader ows that America won its independence through a violent revolution, enched the West from the Indians by brute force, preserved the Union a bloody Civil War, became a world power through two destructive orld wars and is now protecting the luckless people of Vietnam by inerating their tiny country with napalm and high explosives. After all is, to scold the inmates of our black ghettos for resorting to violence hen singing, marching, praying, and picketing have failed seems at best a fle hypocritical.

Violence has also "worked" elsewhere. Our pious insistence that olence never accomplished anything" sounds a bit silly when we remembr the raucous gaggle of furious fishwives who trooped through Paris to rsailles to ignite the French Revolution. And what about the impact of e ragged crowd that stormed the Winter Palace in St. Petersburg in Ocber 1917? The fact is that urban violence *has* accomplished things in the st.

Yes, but will it "work" today? The question sounds insane to ghetto idents. They know that the violence of slavetraders, slumlords and bigo- has "worked" all too well over the centuries to keep them down. And y know that this type of violence still has them in its clutches. Black employment is still 250 percent greater than white unemployment. ong youth, it is eight times as high.

But isn't progress being made? Aren't Negroes "moving too fast"? e statistic speaks volumes. Infant mortality among blacks was 66 per- t higher than among whites in 1950; today it is 90 percent higher. etto youngsters don't read government statistics, but eight out of ten gro young men in Hough are out of work. They know it hurts and niliates. Let us not ask these violated young men whether violence

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Front Cover Photo: Warner Bros. Photo.

works. It has worked on them an they know it. Besides, the outbreak in today's black ghettos are not cali brated on a cost-effectiveness compu ter. Heaving a molotov cocktail i not really a way of accomplishin something; it is a way of *expressin* something: fury, frustration, hatrec For the black youth who smashe Whitey's car window, the act work if his rage cannot be misunderstooc

Today's ghetto violence is not tool. It is a scream. Why els should it seem so strategically misd rected? The revolutionary crowds i Paris and Moscow did not smas liquor stores and haberdasheries. The broke into palaces and seized the o gans of government. Harassing firi men has never won a revolution. Eve if white merchants finally flee th Harlems they have bled for so lon the result will not be epochal. Th Negro merchants who move in w soon discover that power over t ghetto has little to do with who se the transistors. The real power b longs to people whose offices a homes lie miles away from the deva tation.

Expressing violence may provi the brutalized victims of racism son fleeting or symptomatic relief. It wi touch the root of oppression, ho ever, only if it becomes organized a tactically focused. This is the r spectre that should haunt us—not t sportive and inchoate violence Newark, but the recognition that very small number of desperate p ple with only a few weapons a just a smidgin of tactical imaginat

ɔuld cripple and strangle a whole metropolitan area. And when cities stop ınctioning, the nation expires.

Let us not waste another breath trying to convince the children of rispus Attucks that violence never works. But it always evokes counter-olence, and frequently the pain and bitterness it produces cancel out any-ing it gains. Is there another way? There is. But in recalling it we alize we may already be too late. Not to admit this grim possibility ould be idle. Still, it may not be too late. No one really knows.

If white America hears the scream and foregoes giving unsought ad-ce to Negroes, there are things that could still be done.

- We *could* quintuple the poverty budget and put it directly into the nds of black neighborhood groups rather than sifting it through the cky tentacles of city hall poverty offices.
- We *could* embark on a massive program of low cost housing, with e construction jobs and the control of the projects firmly in the hands of etto residents themselves.
- We *could* redirect the billions we compulsively throw at Vietnam o rebuilding the rat-infested centers of our cities.
- We *could* begin paying at least as much for education as we do for oze.
- We *could* place police, welfare and health services under the direc-n of the people they are supposed to serve.
- We *could* refocus our energy and imagination into one last effort to ve ourselves from the furies. The trouble is that disparate groups of peo-: have always opposed any real national program of this type, any redi-rtion of our wealth into the starving public sector. Now, however, such ɔups think they have a sure-fire clincher for their argument. Much of ch a national effort would benefit Negroes, and they obviously just don't serve anything. Racism has now nudged us to the edge of catastrophe. the same time it prevents our taking the steps that are needed to save rselves. It is racism that is our real national enemy. It will certainly de-ɔy us all, and soon, unless we destroy it.

We *could*. But will we? King George III refused to believe the re-ts from Boston. An eight-year war ensued. A national guardsman de-ibed the Newark uprising as "just like a war between two nations." ıybe he was wrong, maybe just premature. That war has not quite be-n, not yet. If it does, God help us. We will assuredly disembowel our-ves as a nation and, just as in a hydrogen war, there will be no winners, ite or black. Only losers. ▼

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THE RIOTING IN DETROIT

Some Negro teens share their reactions
What are their feelings about black power?
How have relationships between the races been affected?
What can teens do now?

As the center of the U.S. auto industry, Detroit has experienced civil disorders before. But in July one of the most destructive disorders in U. S. history killed at least 43 persons, injured 386, and damaged or destroyed 477 buildings, with the total loss to the city possibly reaching a half-billion dollars. The igniting spark happened on 12th Street, a Negro slum area. To get the reactions from some of Detroit's young Negroes, YOUTH magazine invited the young people of Plymouth Congregational Church to discuss the rioting and its implications. The young people represent different sections of Detroit but mostly come from middle-class families. The church's senior minister, Rev. Nicholas Hood, is the only Negro member of Detroit's governing Common Council. When his family received threatening phone calls during the riots, Mr. Hood even considered sending his wife and children out of town for safety. Another of Plymouth's pastors, Rev. Roger Miller, led the tape-recorded discussion which follows.

Let's start off by sharing your views on the riot here in Detroit.

CHERYL HOCKER: First of all, I think Detroit is very lucky that it wasn't a *race* riot. I mean, in some ways it was because they were attacking white stores, but they weren't attacking people. Detroit would have been in a lot of trouble if it had been a real race riot.

HENRY LUSIER: I disagree with Cheryl for one reason. I think it was a race riot, even if it wasn't white and colored physically fighting in the street. It was more like the black people against the white system.

SANDRA ADAMS: A better name than race riot would be economic riot. These people were angry because of their economic status. They were hitting businesses.

HENRY: Look at it as a black revolution—not only in Detroit but throughout the whole country.

LEONARD ANDREWS: You can't call it a black revolution because there are so many so-called middle-class black people who were against it and looking down on the people who were rioting.

...ng down Grand River Avenue, one of Detroit's ... thoroughfares, smoke from burning buildings ...e spotted at various places along the way. In ...stance is the outline of the tall buildings of the ...own area. Wide World Photo

GAYLE NELSON: But you can't ignore the fact that there were raci overtones. Having "soul brother" written on the storefronts of certai businesses did keep those businesses from being looted.

RUDY CARSON: I think it was very wonderful. It was a display of tru black brother organization—getting together and doing something. Whe I say "true black brother" I mean not the middle-class Negro—he's not true black brother, but the lower-class Negro.

ELIZABETH ROSS: But, then how do you explain the white people wh were also out there looting and starting fires? It wasn't only Negroes.

RICHARD HARPER: My brother was in town working for the NAACI The deputy commissioner of police told him that most of the snipers a rested were white.

FRANCETTA JACKSON: Well, I think the riot was great because they sa Negroes couldn't get themselves together to do anything, and I think th proved them very, very wrong.

DIANE DEAN: But, I don't think the Negroes were together. Ea person was out for himself. And, if the middle class Negroes were agai this whole thing, then the Negroes themselves weren't together.

MICHAEL NEAL: I was in the midst of most of what was happeni Sunday, and as I saw it, it seemed like there was some togetherness. The were people running around in cars breaking out windows, but th wouldn't take anything, they would just leave it for the people in th particular neighborhood.

CYNTHIA STEVENS: Is it a cause of pride that we could get oursel together to loot?

FRANCETTA: President Johnson has been told right along that he shou stop worrying about the war in Vietnam and look at the Negroes' pro lems here in the U. S. Now, we are finally making him look—at wh they've been talking about for so long. Before he wasn't hearing—no he's hearing.

SANDRA: Yes, we've called attention to the problem, but what are th doing about it? Nothing! All they're doing is appointing a lot of co mittees—the same kind of stuff they've been doing over and over again.

GROVER STAHL: Maybe something good will come of the committe They might go down deep enough and find out what's really wrong.

BENSON STEWART: All these committees appointed by the President a big phony—a gigantic hypocrisy, a big front. Now they're going arou trying to find out if the riot was organized. It wasn't organized, but was an economic revolution. And it wasn't just the poor out there tak stuff; there were midle-class people there, too. The main problem is th people who don't have things, want things. Once all the chaos was h pening, they knew they couldn't get caught.

MARGUERITE CAIN: One good that came from the riot is that a lot buildings that should have been torn down or repaired long ago are do now. What will happen to the people who lived in them is a consequen that they were willing to face.

MELVIN WILLIAMS: The riot got rid of a lot of tension that had been uilding up of white against black. It may now give a chance to be able o talk to them, or to help them to help themselves.

MICHAEL: Marguerite was right, all those buildings should have been lown. But what will happen is they'll move all of the people who were urned out into another rat-hole. Then they'll build it all up, make parks nd middle-class buildings—and then they'll move white people back in here. The whole cycle of the city will start all over again.

RUDY: Ever since the riot, I've heard middle-class Negroes sit down nd talk about what they thought was good and bad about the riot and bout the lower-class Negro people and how they did this or did that. ut, I've never heard it said, "I want to go down there and talk to one of hem. I want to get down there and find out what their complaints are." Vhy don't they get up and go down there and talk to each other? If a ower class Negro doesn't trust you, he'll kill you as fast as he'll kill a white nan, or before he'll kill a white man, because he'll call you an Uncle Tom. ut you don't try to get to know him. You sit around and you criticize im all the time.

"We're tired of having people do things for us. We want to do hings ourselves. I mean this isn't way down yonder in New Orleans any more, and we don't need any nice old plantation ugar daddy to take care of us. We're going to help ourselves, whether whitey likes it or not. And that's just what Jerry Baby Mayor Cavanagh) and all those other white liberals don't like. hey're willing to share some of the corn and taters with us, ut when it gets right down to the nitty-gritty of power, they ren't sharing anything."—*young Negro militant*

CYNTHIA: My mother and I spent about three days trying to track down elatives of ours and we finally found them. We talked to my cousin and sked him his impression of whether this was a revolt. I told Ricky that I nought a revolt had to have an ideal behind it—that people knew what ney were doing. He said that, from what he had seen (granted he was ot in on the planning—if, indeed, there was any planning of such a riot) was people reacting, not acting.

Vhat do you feel, or what have you experienced in terms of your elationships with other people, basically white people, in the aftermath of the riot? What has the riot done for integration and race elations?

SANDRA: I've spent a week at camp where there were three Negroes nd about 22 white people. Everyone tried to get our reactions to what ney termed a race riot in Detroit. They're scared of us now, and they're oing everything they can to be nice, and it's sickening. You know, it just

Youth at Plymouth Church in Detroit gather for a discussion.

Photo by Ed Eckstein

turns my stomach, because all of a sudden, everything you do is right, everything you say is such a good statement.

DIANE: I work out in Warren, Mich., and the first thing people said, "Oh, I really feel sorry for you in Detroit." They made statements like "Oh were you right in the area? That is really too bad." They try to make you think you're really important because you've been in a riot. But, then, after a while, they go off in their little groups. I feel the treatment has been the same to me.

FRANCETTA: I think there's fear. They say, "Just a minute" as though they're trying to calm me down, and then they're sweet as pie.

CHERYL: Most of the white people I know were in the riot. So, their attitudes haven't changed one bit, but they'll go around telling other white people, "You'd better be cool, or I'll turn them loose on you."

MICHAEL: I agree with Francetta. The main thing I've encountered was fear. A teacher tried to explain to me why there will never be true integration because of this rioting. White land-owners will now be afraid to sell property to Negroes—not only because they think the value of the property will go down but—because they'll be afraid a riot might happen there and then they'll lose all their money. There will be no total integration because of economics.

GROVER: Well, we're moving into a new house. On Friday we were over there and the lady next door came over and gave us a little gift. I didn't expect it, and maybe this was in her heart to do this all along. I don't know whether it's fear or not.

ELIZABETH: I found, when we moved last summer, that in white areas

"What we've been doing, at the level we've been doing it, is almost worse than nothing at all. . . . We've raised expectations, but we haven't been able to deliver all we should have. To do that we need a lot more money, and much of it has to come from Washington. The time has come for the American people to decide what this country's priorities are. We can do just about anything we want to if we set our mind to it, and this one has to be at the top of our list."—*Mayor Jerome P. Cavanagh of Detroit*

When people move in, it's a custom to bring a present. You bring your neighbor something. After the riot, I was in New York. People would say, "Hi, how are you? Where are you from?" And I'd say, "Detroit." "Detroit?!"—you know, as if to say, "Don't riot here. Go home."

HENRY: Now, instead of calling me "boy" all the time, they're saying "sir." When I get some respect, I don't mind. And, since the riot there's more togetherness among Negroes. And the middle class is getting a little scared too. When they speak of the lower class Negroes, they don't say "Those people" they say, "Well, some of our people." It's changing.

RUDY: I've gotten three or four real harsh stares by groups of white guys and I've been called "nigger" once. I haven't had any of this generous stuff everyone else here is talking about.

RICHARD: One reaction I didn't like was a couple of white people tried to tell me what it was all about, and what I should do about it.

LEONARD: The first thing a guy asked me was "How many color TV's did you get?" I just looked at him. I don't appreciate that kind of stuff.

But people were kind of scared of me. I thought this was kind of good

CYNTHIA: In our block, there is one nice little Jewish family—in a se of black. The little old lady is about 4'11" and nobody in the entire bloc speaks to this woman—but, after the riot, everybody in the block wa speaking to her. Sandra was talking about the way she was patronize up at camp—well, poor little Mrs. Steinburg, all of a sudden people wer speaking to her and carrying her bundles. She was being patronized an she was beginning to worry.

SANDRA: Another thing. All of a sudden in a discussion group every body's so very liberal. It was very apologetic, "I'm liberal, but it's th rest of the world."

RUDY: I've noticed that a lot of Negroes who didn't do anything ar now acting like they owe the white man something because other Negroe have torn up everything.

FRANCETTA: My teacher—a black nationalist—said, "These Negroe who are calling and apologizing are just trying to be 'good niggers.' won't say that the black people were right by burning up those stores, bu

"Detroit already was spending more per capita than most cities Of course we need more, but we also need to find new ways of making that money work. We have to devise techniques for getting money into people's hands without the humiliating and debilitating effects of the welfare system. If anything, the recent events should have shattered a lot of stereotypes and made us search for new ways of doing things."

—*Philip Rutledge of Detroit's antipoverty progra*

I certainly won't call and apologize for anything they did."

HENRY: I live in a half-Negro, half-white neighborhood. Some my neighbors are branding me as an outlaw. You know, the kid's a rebe He wants to go out and burn things. And they watch me.

It's always been said that Detroit was so far ahead of other place racially and economically. There is a large Negro middle-class. S how do you explain the riot's occurring here, if things were so good

LEONARD: It just looked better on the surface. You don't see the hom these people live in on 12th Street and down in this area. Tensions bui up there and pretty soon they explode.

SANDRA: "Better" is a relative expression—like this guy's a *better* driv because he has only 50 parking tickets and the other guy has 500.

MICHAEL: When someone comes to look at Detroit, he goes downtow and out to the suburbs. He doesn't go into the ghettos. You said Detroi has a better middle class—we have more middle class *and* more lower cla than most other cities.

CHERYL: And our ghettos aren't just centered in one place—they're all over Detroit. Look behind the good part anywhere in Detroit and you'll find the ghetto.

RUDY: Politicians consider the middle class and the rich people because that's where the votes come from. They're not worried about the small ghettos and the black men who live in them. Once you get politicians to realize that if they don't worry about the little men they're not going to get elected, maybe they'll try to do something for the little men, too.

What are your thoughts about black power—what does it mean, and do you subscribe to it?

FRANCETTA: If black power means all white people are taken out of the driver's seat and all black people put in, I don't favor this, because then it's just the reverse of white power.

MARGUERITE: I used to think it meant beating the white man at his own game, but now I realize that black power is getting rid of the system altogether—and there's nowhere to go in our system but up.

MICHAEL: What's a definition of black power we can all agree on?

HENRY: To me, it means the political and economic power of the black people. Getting them together and controlling votes and controlling their neighborhoods. They've tried marching and non-violence and all that jazz, but now it's come down to a more hard-tack thing. We've got to get it one way or the other. We're equal people and we want our equal rights.

SANDRA: I think everyone agrees that black power means gaining political, economic, and even social rights. The big rub is how do you go about it? It's when you come to *method* that everyone has his own definition of black power.

RUDY: Black power pertains to the lower class Negro. It's a way of trying to get him up and out from under—usually from under the thumb of the white man. It's done by first trying to get black people to run for political offices so they can help their black brothers. But, if they find this won't work, then they'll go along to the conclusion to annihilate the whole white race.

CYNTHIA: I'm for black pride, without—as Francetta said—getting reverse racism. If it comes to a complete annihilation of the white race, I think this will eventually annihilate us as a people also.

What are your views of Stokely Carmichael?

LEONARD: When I heard him speak at Central Congregational Church, I was very impressed. He was talking to a group of predominantly lower-class Negroes and giving them a simple pride in their blackness and what they were. But, he is sort of an instigator. He gets people to a point where they're so roused up and militant that they just want to lash out—and this is totally bad.

MARGUERITE: He never told us what we didn't know. He just told us what we were afraid to face up to.

HENRY: It's true that he's an instigator. But, he's instigating racial pride, and I don't think there's anything wrong with that. When a person tells you to prove you're a Negro, that you have something to fight for and to believe in, I think you should listen to him.

CYNTHIA: He's told us—the black people—what we ought to get rid of, but he has yet to tell us a constructive program of how to rebuild.

RUDY: He's advocated constructive programs like education. He stresses education more than anything else. He's telling the lower-class black man and the middle-class black man—because he talks to all of them—to have pride in your race and to show it instead of sitting down or standing around and watching another black brother get kicked in the face. I see nothing wrong with this.

How do you feel about H. Rap Brown? He's the new president of SNCC who said, "We built this country and we can burn it down."

RICHARD: I think Stokely Carmichael's own description of H. Rap Brown stands pretty well. He said to reporters, "This man—he is a bad man. You'll be glad to have me back." And I think he's right. H. Rap Brown talks like he has no sense. Negroes may have built part of this country, but we didn't build all of it, and maybe we can burn it down but I'm sure when they start trying to go out and set fire to the suburbs where they've got those shotguns—we'll see.

SONNY MCKINNEY: Rap Brown may sound as if he doesn't know what he's talking about, but he can back up what he says.

How do you feel about the late Malcolm X?

CHERYL: I think he was a beautiful man. From what I've heard of his speeches, he does something to me; he gives me a sense of pride. I actually try to think of something to do—and try to tell other people.

ROBERT: He was a philosopher who came a little bit too early for his time. It's a pity that his talent went to waste. If he had come around about the time that Stokely Carmichael did, maybe all this rioting would not have happened in the way that it did.

HENRY: I don't know if he was ahead of his time, but he was a fantastic man. That guy was deep.

What do you think of Roy Wilkins?

CYNTHIA: Mr. Wilkins and many of his contemporaries (like A. Philip Randolph) have a definite disadvantage in the movement. Today is a day for youth—of all races in this entire country—and, unfortunately, Mr. Wilkins has very little contact with youth. When he does give a speech in which he decides to condescend to talk to us, it sounds just like that—condescension. As a group, the older men don't seem to have too much to say to the youth—perhaps because they don't know how to say it.

RUDY: He's obsolete.

VINCENT BRANTLEY: Two words describe Roy Wilkins: Uncle Tom.

The only people praying for peace in a confused way are black eople in America. This is our distorted slave Christianity. od helps those who have power. Let's do the things that are ecessary to get power. Let's not wait until we're destroyed. . . . man may have a big house, a nice car, but he's not through. he real lesson is that all black men are a group. Either they ake it as a group, or they don't make it at all. We're all in this inking, sinking boat together."—*Rev. Albert Cleage, Jr., pastor of Central United Church of Christ*

low do you feel about the police?

FRANCETTA: They're fascists. They've got this thing about "We've got get these niggers back under control. We've got to show them who's eir master and who's their boss." I don't like them.

MICHAEL: I don't know what neighborhood she lives in. No offense. ut, where I live, the police were just running around in their cars. They idn't hop out and tell anyone anything. They just sat around and watched verybody and everybody was sitting around watching them. They were ared that the minute they'd say something to someone, it would start a hole new thing.

ROBERT: I feel the Detroit police force did a very outstanding job all st week. Not many Negroes join the police force—most of the force is hite, but they take a job just like you take a job any place else. They have responsibility. They did their job.

RUDY: The NAACP has a suit against the Detroit Police Department ecause of discrimination. It's not that Negroes don't want to be policemen -it's because they're discriminated against. Another thing, if the police ere handling things so well, why were so many Negro boys beaten in the st week? There's been a lot of police brutality.

hat do you feel needs to be done to eliminate the reason for the ots?

ROBERT: Sanitation. When you live in dirt, people lose respect for you d you lose respect for yourself. A person can live in rags, as long as ey're clean. Clean up the city—dirt, rats, flies—and there'll be a 100% nprovement.

HENRY: Politics plays a part. Politicians sit on top of a big white hill d laugh about a rat control bill. If they keep postponing those bills and n't take any action—we will.

MICHAEL: If they stopped messing around by pouring money into Viet- m and all the other countries in the world and poured it back into educa- n—helping the Negro to be a Negro and a productive person—and put oney back into building up where the Negro lives—not Grosse Pointe— at will stop riots. You know, if he lives in a rat-hole, he'll burn that

out and think nothing about it, but if he lives in a nice place, he's going to help defend it.

FRANCETTA: President Johnson should show some action, not just deliver those long 50-minute TV speeches—about what he tried to do or is going to do—that interrupt our good programs.

CYNTHIA: Michael said Negroes should be educated to be Negroes. No offense meant to the wonderful white race here, but you can't do it. We've got to educate ourselves to be Negroes. I think the only thing that's going to save us from another riot is solidarity between black and black.

VINCENT: People are going to keep rioting—not just black, but white people, too. It's the people who have money who are keeping the money, while more and more people are being put out of work as machines take over. There are going to be more and more people complaining, and, after awhile, this entire country is going to be in a riot.

What can a white young person do in this whole situation? What ought to be their stance?

RICHARD: The white teenager shouldn't set himself up like he's a papa or God. He should try honestly to react to Negroes—not to try to make them like him, but act to them as he would act to any other person. I have seen very few white teenagers who react to Negroes as *people* all the way down the line. At one point, they just draw a line and say, "I can go no further than this." This is the sort of stuff that discourages Negroes—and it discourages integration.

CHERYL: I agree. I've noticed it's become a fad among the white kids to have a Negro friend: "Oh, she comes over my house every day." This sort of thing. Just don't pretend any more. What they should do to help us is, like a black nationalist said, "Go out and tell your friends and tell your parents what's happening, and ask them to stop it before it does happen or they're going to be hurt."

MICHAEL: Wouldn't it be better if the white kids quit trying to come down to our level. . . .

SEVERAL: Come *up* to our level!

MICHAEL: . . . and just accept us? They don't have to take it upon themselves to accept us because we still have to accept them.

RUDY: The real problem is not when they're teenagers or in college, it's after college. They're scared of Negroes in the competitive world, so they try to keep them down.

FRANCETTA: They should stop looking at us as if to say, "Oh, that's a Negro," and say, "Oh, that's a young man" or "That's a young lady."

LEONARD: In reaction to the riots, I think teenagers surrounding Detroit should come into Detroit and educate themselves on the problems, what's happening. They should come in with like many of the church groups who are going out and doing something constructive and work with these people. I think that would be great.

UPI Photo

ut here on 12th Street they say whitey hasn't got the message. he ain't, we're ready to give it to him all over again. And xt time it ain't gain' to be no little barbecue like the last one. e're gettin' ready to kill, and we're getting ready to die."

—a young 12th Street regular

ANDRA: Rather than have white people come to help the Negro, I think white person should work in his own neighborhood. You've got lots can do at home, either trying to change attitudes of people or helping ple right there in your own community.

HERYL: Why can't you who are white think of yourself as becoming a ck person, not us as becoming white persons. You can't understand a son's problems unless you put yourself in his shoes. If you try to put in yours, that's not going to help anything.

ENRY: I think white youth should know we want respect—and if it's red, we'll give it. ▼

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riots
rights
responsibility

Mauldin, The Chicago Sun-Times © 19

FREEDOM MARCH— 1967 STYLE

Fawcett, Providence (R. I.) Journal-Bulletin

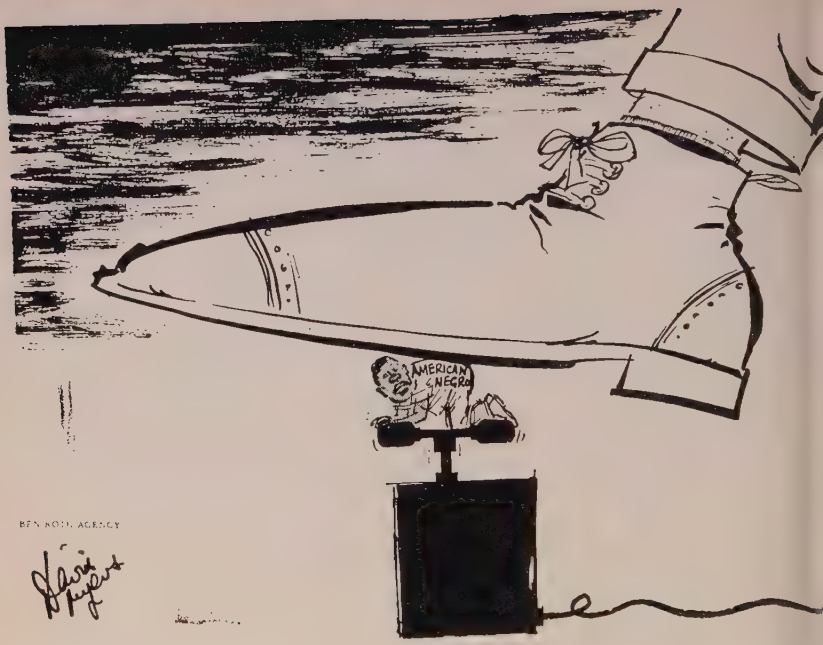
"I'm concerned, dear. Last year they were 500 miles away. This year it's 15. Next year they could be in my petunia bed."

"Can't you dig up a treaty or something to show that kind of commitment to us?"

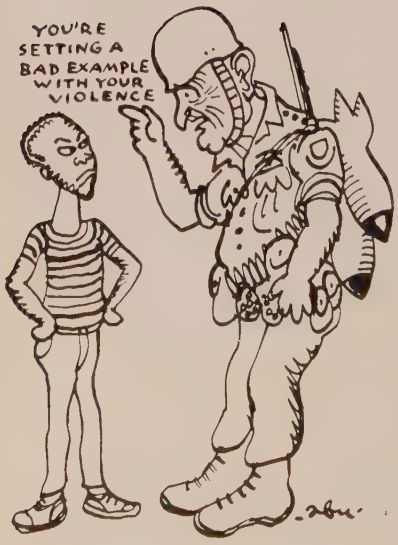
Herblock, Washington Post

"Go back to your homes and act like civilized human beings."

Wright, Miami News



David Myers, Evening News, London (Ben Roth A



Abu, The Tribune, London (Ben Roth Agency)

ow Europeans view the riots

F. Behrendt

Behrendt, Algemeen Handelsblad, Amsterdam (Ben Roth Agency)

BLACK POW(D)ER

WANTED: More teache

The portrayal of school life in New York City in "Up the Down Staircase"—first in the book, now in the movie—is both satiric because of the absurdities of man's mistakes and sad because it's all too real. The problems facing the urban schools—overcrowded classes, keeping discipline, overburdened administration, underpaid teachers, untouched dropouts—are all tied up tightly with the problems of a sick society—the poor man's poverty, the affluent man's apathy, and every man's prejudice. And the victims are the young.

In the film version, to portray the students in Bel Kaufman's fictional Calvin Coolidge High, teens from similar real-life situations were hired as actors. In fact, the fictional José Rodriguez is, by coincidence, played by a real-life José Rodriguez, and the class clown (Lou Martin) is played by a former student of Miss Kaufman's (Lew Wallach).

Visiting the school building where scenes were being shot a year ago, YOUTH's editor and two local youth —Cheryl Garnant and Ronald Canada—talked with José, Lew, and others. When the casting director spotted YOUTH's two young visitors, they were invited to be in the movie's school-dance sequence. Says Ron: "It was hard work—long, grueling hours of repetition, standing around, and perspiring. But it was a lifetime chance to be seen on the screen, if only for a moment."

e Miss Sylvia Barrett

Warner Bros. Photo

an interview with Bel Kaufman:

In her best-selling novel, *Up the Down Staircase,* Bel Kaufman drew o her 17 years of experience as a high school English teacher in the Ne York City school system to tell the tale of "Calvin Coolidge High Schoo and of Sylvia Barrett, a bright, pretty, compassionate, young Englis teacher in her first term on the faculty. Readers share Miss Barrett's intr duction to the anguish and joy of our educational system through a "gra bag of gleanings" from her blackboard, wastebasket, mailbox, suggestio box, and students' schoolwork.

And now Warner Bros. has translated her book into a film version whic has already won acclaim as the United States representative in the 196 Moscow Film Festival in July. Sandy Dennis, who plays the lead role Teacher Barrett, won the festival's best actress award for her performanc As the film began to appear in theaters across the country, YOUTH magazi interviewed Authoress Bel Kaufman.

What kind of feedback are you getting from young people who' read your book?

Since the book came out in paperback about a year and a half ago, t whole tenor of my mail has changed. The kids are now writing to me an the letters are marvelous. I always answer them myself. I don't let n secretary touch them. They write, "Dear Miss Barrett," for they identi so completely with the teacher in the book. They say, in effect, "I ca communicate with my parents, my teachers often don't know my nam so I write to you." Or they write, "I appear on page so and so of yo book." Or they ask, "I know the book is made up, but whatever happen to Alice? Did she ever . . . and did Joe?"

Just this morning I received a letter addressed to "Miss Sylvia Barre c/o Avon Books." The child writes, "Dear Miss Barrett: I doubt that y will ever get my letter, or if you do, it will probably be ignored, but I asking you now to please not ignore it. I'm 13 years old. I have brow hair, brown eyes, and I'm 5′2″ tall. Your book *Up the Down Staircase* the best book in the world. I've read it twice. I've seen the movie thr times. Please, Miss Barrett, if by some miracle you get this letter, read and please send me your autograph. This would mean more to me th anything else in the world. So I'm asking you with all my heart to re this. Please! Please read! Please! P.S.: Please!"

Another note said, "I wish I had *you* for a teacher, Miss Barrett. Y seem to like us." That's a full sentence, isn't it? Each one in his own lit wilderness is saying this. "Care about me. Pay attention. Here I am And to me, that is primarily what teaching should be.

What's the hangup of the generation gap?

It seems to me that the old boundaries are becoming very fuzzy. You people no longer have a hero, either to emulate or rebel against. There a sort of non-hero. Look at our theater, the theater of the absurd. Lo

During the filming of "Up the Down Staircase," Authoress Bel Kaufman and Mayor John Lindsay visited the movie set. Also shown are Film Writer Tad Mosel, Actress Sandy Dennis, Director Robert Mulligan, and others.

our literature. There is no longer a strict line between good and bad; is is right, this is wrong; this is moral, this is immoral. The parents themves are confused—the enlightened ones have read all the books that nfused them even more; they no longer trust their instincts.

With so very little to guide them, the youngsters have to make their n way. Of course, the population explosion and their enormous power consumers have given young people a sort of status which they are ing and abusing in a way which I think has been unprecedented.

I think these youngsters feel they cannot change the world (at least not the way my generation tried through some organized means to express satisfaction and to change the world). Consequently they're trying to ange their own private world—LSD, drugs, their music, or whatever it —so that their own world is strictly theirs. They stake the claims. "Don't ich. Look at my mini-skirt; look at my long hair. You older generation ve nothing to do with us." And it may be a sort of defeatism about the rld itself that is causing them to turn inward rather than outward.

You mentioned the lack of black-and-white guidelines in ethical d other areas of life. Some young people maintain that you can't

say there is a black and white because a mature person should t to think discriminately about both sides of the issues.

Yes, but there must be both sides of the issues to begin with. Th must be 10 or 20 or a thousand sides of any issue. If they exist a if they are clear, then the young person can, in groping toward maturi arrive at some conclusions. But there is very little to cull, to collect, gather. The world appears pretty chaotic to them. Never before ha we had the concept of total annihilation. Never before have we had t kinds of freedoms—sexual freedoms, financial freedoms, exposure to vari adult areas—that young people have today. It is just not easy to be you ever. And I think it's more difficult now than ever before.

You mentioned the mini-skirt and the long hair. Are these sy bolic of something? What about the schools where they are p hibited by code?

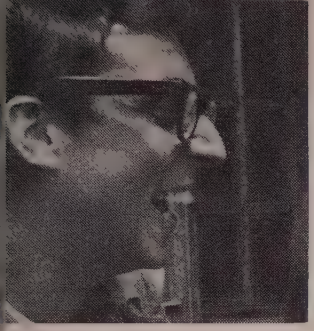
To answer the first question, I think they are not only symbolic realistically very indicative of the fact that the kids are saying, "Ha off. This is our province. This is something that the older generation c not usurp. Our mothers cannot wear mini-skirts; our fathers cannot w long hair." It's also a rebellion: "This is our way of expressing ourselv With regard to the schools' policies, I may appear too tolerant, but it see to me that it is totally unimportant whether a boy has long hair or sh the important thing to me is if his face lights up at a line of poetry, o he goes to the library because you give him a provocative theme to do.

What are some of the things bugging teachers today?

I think they are more or less the things which I have reflected in book. I think my book hit some kind of common nerve ending beca there is a sense of immediate recognition no matter where the school I thought I was writing about New York City. I know only about N York high schools. I've taught in some dozen of them. But apparentl was describing conditions as they exist around the country, including more affluent communities like Grosse Pointe, Mich., from which some wrote to me, "Even the misspellings are the same. How did you kno And the youngsters are just as deprived, even if they come to school their Jags or Cads. They are deprived emotionally, intellectually, spiritua Problems may not be the same, but they're so similar.

In other words, is this commonness in the problems more in th causes than in their manifestations?

Yes, I think so. Certainly in all the large school systems throughout country there is an emphasis on the trivial, the bureaucratic setup t strangulates teachers with all kinds of red-tape, non-teaching chores. have received piles and piles of letters from teachers and students throu out the country; they send me their corroborative materials, the ubiquit



***Me, I have a character. There's not another face in the world like mine. My face and thick eye-glasses bothered me at first, but now I'm happy about it. I want to be different. There's a demand for actors who are different. Television commercials feature unusual people. Movies don't want all Cary Grants. My face is a trademark—it's like Woody Allen or Peter Sellers or Eddie Cantor. What I once thought was a handicap is an asset.*—Lew Wallach.**

e mimeos from their own administrations. I couldn't possibly have in-
ted them, or if I had, I would have had to tone them down for credi-
ty because some of them would have been unbelievable. One of the
chers informed me that since their new principal came into office, all
down staircases have been marked "Up," all the up staircases have
n marked "Down," and staircases to the basement are "Down" only.

What were the reactions of administrators to your book?

A psychological factor is working on my behalf here. I was afraid I had
pped on a great number of administrative toes, but I've had no adverse
nments from administrators. Quite the contrary. They are pleased. They
, "It's about time that we, too, become aware." The reason must be that
one sees himself. It's the other fellow he sees.

**If changes are to be made, won't we have to go beyond just being
ighted by your book and the issues in it? Won't the administra-
s have to see something more than the other guy?**

Actually the administration is not a villain either. That's the tragedy:
t can't pinpoint the villain. It's certainly not the administrators. They're
her helpless. Their teaching load is often thousands, and there are pres-
es from all sides. They can't see the young trees for the forest. It's
tainly not the teachers. They're trying valiantly to go up their down
ircase. And it's certainly not the children. I guess it's the large, de-
sonalized system.

Do you mean beyond the whole system?

It's the setup hit by the impact of too many children, too many classes,
many in a class, too much extraneous work with which a teacher is
dened. Consequently the teacher on the elementary or high school level
oys no dignity, nor does the student. If I make a plea at all between the
es, it is a plea for the dignity of your profession. I find that it exists on
college level much more than in high school, where teachers, good
es, are needed far more than in the colleges.

On the college level, student organizations have drawn up students' bill of rights. What do you think about this?

I think it's a healthy sign. As a matter of fact, there are many straws i the wind. Teachers have become much more militant.

Strikes?

Yes, it's unfortunate that they should be forced to take extreme measur —and I don't want to discuss whether or not they should strike—but wh I am interested in is what brings them to the point of having to strike. I my day, they were a fairly depressed, suppressed, and muted grou frightened, taking orders without much demurral. It is good now th they're beginning to find a voice. The public is becoming more aware what's happening, too.

Might the public be part of the villain through its indifference o opposition to improvements in local education that cause increase taxes? Or is it society as a whole, or the government that does n do enough in terms of salaries for teachers?

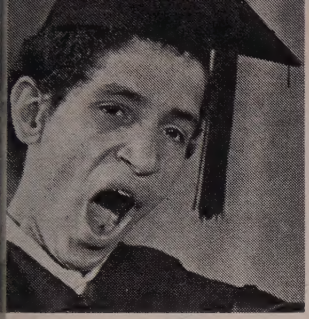
I don't know. I don't have my finger on the pulse right now. I've be away from teaching for about two years, but I've been lecturing a gre deal throughout the country and talking at huge teacher conventio Salaries, although very important, are not the main issue. All the teache I know personally—who have either been resigning from the school sy tems or, which is worse, becoming resigned, not caring—are dissatisfi because of pressures *other* than the financial ones.

What are these pressures?

Well, they don't have time to teach. They don't have elbow room, i tellectually or physically. They don't have the equipment, the facilitie they don't have small classes; they don't enjoy the leisure in which to pr pare themselves; they don't have the opportunity for that person-to-perso contact with the youngster, which to me is the essence of teaching. O of the most pathetic notes I ever received from a student said, "I'll nev forget the time you talked to me on the subway." Now imagine! The su way is sometimes the only place a teacher can make that face-to-face co tact with a student.

Given the problems posed by the sheer enormity of the syste where do you envision that improvements can begin to be made?

Certainly I have posed many questions that are extremely difficult answer. I don't have any answers, but I believe that teaching shou begin with the teacher. That's my primary premise. If a teacher does n have the time or the strength or the energy or the training or the talent approach this problem, then we're defeated before we begin. I think should lure the most talented teachers into our system. We should tra them well. We should give them maximal conditions for teaching. Th



In every little thing you have to prove yourself. I want to prove myself in this movie as I proved myself to a teacher who thought I wouldn't be anything. When somebody neglects you and tells you you're no good, and finally when you prove to him and he faces you and says, "You're something better than I thought you were," then you feel great. You've overcome something. That's what you appreciate most.

—José Rodriguez (*in real life*)

se their door and they'll do their magic. They still do. It's extraordinary v many great teachers are doing unsung heroic work of which no one ows, except perhaps a student who one day will say, "Gee, I had a teacher o . . ." and those are about the only rewards.

What, then, are the qualities of a good teacher?

'd say stamina—emotional, intellectual stamina. I'd say a sense of nor, which is really a sense of proportion. That's the ability to see the urdities and to puncture pomposities and to see things in perspective, to allow oneself to be sucked into this whole maelstrom of nonsense. I nk that excellence in teaching requires a genuine fondness for young peo- . Note that I'm not saying a knowledge of one's subject matter. That I e for granted. And the good teachers are not necessarily the good olars. Good teachers must have the ability to ignite, to provoke, to ex- e, to set one mind against another, to allow students to do their own ginal thinking, which is difficult and lonely and uphill work.

Our whole culture is one of absorption, passive rather than active. Look our mass media—TV, picture magazines, movies, radio. Very little is uired in terms of questioning the printed page, or someone who stands ront of the room.

And it's in this very adolescent period that a great deal of ques- ning is very natural, is it not?

Yes, and it should be encouraged, as should the ability to think, to listen, collect information, to arrive at one's own conclusions, instead of being t a captive sponge that absorbs, then squeezes back information. That not learning. So little excitement, so little awe, so little imagination is ught into play.

In translating your book into the movie, what were some of the jor problems?

The major one was that of translating to a purely visual medium—the ema—a book that was told through implication, indirection, memos. The der of the book had to imagine the youngsters through the doodles or

through what they wrote. I tried to say with succinctness somethi important in their own fumbling, ungrammatical way, such as "Can y guess by my handwriting if I'm white or not?" Well, that says it. Now t movie viewer sees a character on the screen with eyes, with a nose, wi hair, so it becomes specific. It can no longer be part of what a read brings to it. The memos and the whole collage that I used as a techniq also had to be translated into a more or less coherent, continuous narr tive. I think the movie is extremely faithful to the book. Much of t dialogue, all the characters are there. A couple were combined, a coup were eliminated. The major incidents are there. Some of the satiric thrus are gone and for good reason. The emphasis is more on the poignanc Sandy Dennis gives it a sort of wistful, vulnerable quality.

I think they were very wise in casting. They were brilliant in getti and casting non-professional youngsters who had never acted before a who give it an almost documentary feeling of reality. They were brillia in producing it in New York in a real high school. As a matter of fa it's traditional to throw a party at the end of the shooting, so Warne gave a party in the gym of the high school where it had been produce We all ended the party by singing the Calvin Coolidge alma mater, "T Purple and Gold," and I found myself singing it with tears running do my cheeks. I said to myself, "Why are you crying? You made up t song. There is no such school." But it was so real to those kids. They we even given diplomas. It was as though they had gone there. It's a ve authentic film, non-vulgarized.

Were you at all disappointed with the movie translation?

Well, it wasn't *my* book. It was as close to it as it could get, so wha ever I expected, I don't know. The spirit certainly has come through co pletely intact. You know the dangers of Hollywoodizing. This did n happen. They approached it with real compassion and skill.

* * *

For the reader-become-viewer, the Warner Bros. production of *Up t Down Staircase* is remarkably faithful to the book. When seeing t screen dramatization of the teens, teachers, and other officials of Calv Coolidge High, one shares Miss Kaufman's almost *déja vue* feeling, "We there you are, of course." Only Sandy Dennis in the role of Sylvia Barre seems to lack some of the spirit, the penetrating sense of satire and hum that so endeared the book's Miss Barrett to pupil and reader. "She's n my Sylvia Barrett," observes Bel Kaufman, "but she gives it a dimensi which is very valid, and she plays well, especially with the tough bo because she is so vulnerable and so real."

Now that both book and film are projects completed, Miss Kaufman w turn to other forms of teaching and writing. As as assistant professor English at the Borough of Manhattan Community College her teachi

Photo by Dan Rubin

Cheryl Garnant and Ronald Canada, representing YOUTH magazine, talk with Lew Wallach during a break in filming his scenes as the class clown in "Up the Down Staircase."

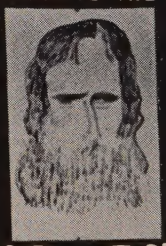
s been on a college level for the past four years. After a two-year leave-
-absence she is returning to the College this fall to give some workshops.
er whole family in fact will be in school, with a son doing graduate work
Berkeley, and a daughter beginning Ph.D. work in psychology at the
niversity of Michigan.

School, from both sides of the teacher's desk, has consumed a great por-
on of Bel Kaufman's life. Born in Berlin, she lived until the age of 12 in
ussia, where her father was a doctor and her mother a short story writer.
er family then emigrated to the United States, and 12-year-old Bel Kauf-
an began her American education and learned her English with a class
six-year-olds in the first grade of an elementary school in the Bronx.
ater she graduated Phi Beta Kappa and *magna cum laude* from Hunter
ollege and did her M.A. work in 18th century literature at Columbia
niversity.

Perpetuating the literary legacy that is hers as the granddaughter of
e famous Yiddish philosopher-humorist, Sholom Aleichem, Miss Kaufman
now working on a new novel and on lyrics for a musical. Neither, how-
er, deals with education; for she admits that "I've said everything I want
about that." We suspect, though, that she will continue to say a great
eal about education whenever and wherever she enters a classroom. Miss
arrett, the English teacher at Calvin Coolidge High, possessed a rare
mbination of sensitivity, humor, strength, and talent that enabled her
o ignite, to provoke, to excite," to set the mind of even the most embit-
red Joe Ferone against that of the most withdrawn Jose Rodriguez. Miss
aufman, the creator *and* the teacher, has undoubtedly done likewise in
al life and experienced on more than one occasion what it means "to
ake a permanent difference to at least one child."—KAY HANCOCK

REWARD

FOR INFORMATION LEADING TO THE APPREHENSION OF—



JESUS CHRIST

Wanted for sedition and conspiring to overthrow the established Government— dresses poorly, said to be a carpenter by trade, ill nourished, has visionary ideas, associates with common working people, the unemployed, and bums. Alien – believed to be a Jew. Alias: "Prince of Peace"–"Son of Man"–"Light of the world," etc., etc. Professional Agitator. Red beard, mark on hands and feet-the result of injuries inflicted By an angry mob led by respectable citizens and legal authorities

On the blackboard of th
Youth Ministry of Plymou
Church, Detroit Mic

Photo by Ed Ecksto